

W. L. G.'s first letter to Elizabeth Pease.

(Copy)

73

Boston. Nov: 6th 1837.

Esteemed Friend,

There are many of my countrymen who regard me as a rash disturber of the peace of Society, scarcely fit to be tolerated upon my native soil; and though they have not said of me what was charged against my Master, namely, that "he hath a devil", yet they do not scruple to give me the apostolic character of being "a seditious and pestilent fellow". How does it happen, then, that you, a stranger to me personally, a "foreigner" on the other side of the Atlantic, are disposed to cherish a good opinion of me, to approbate my labors, & even to aid me in my "incendiary" and "fanatical" purposes by a generous donation? Ought not my own countrymen to know me better than a resident in England?

Their testimony is very strong against me; it is unequivocal; it goes to impeach my sanity, if not to injure my moral character. Ah! they are not disinterested witnesses. — I have not only accused them of being hostile to the rights of man, and in ranking immortal souls among cattle & creeping things, of having exalted themselves above all that is called God, but I have sustained the dreadful accusation by plenary evidence; hence their hatred of me. The act of violence is in their hands and they know it; their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; And whosoever among them that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey; for truth has fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

My beloved and invaluable coadjutor Angelina & Grimké has promptly conveyed to me the five guineas which you were pleased to transmit in the letter she has recently received from you.

I receive the gift as a token of your sympathy for the suffering & the dumb in this recreant land, whose cause it is my happiness to advocate, and for whose deliverance from bondage all that I have and am is pledged, without any reservation whatever. My heart is grateful in view of your kindness, and especially to know that I possess your esteem; but you shall not be burdened with mere words in return. Deep and genuine emotion has no "set phrase of speech".

With regard to the present state of the anti-slavery question in this country, you will be pleased to learn that the friends of the slave are daily multiplying in all parts of the non-slaveholding States; that there are now not less than twelve hundred anti-slavery societies in existence; that the spirit of lawless violence is in a great measure subdued, not by the arm of law, but by the power of truth and the victorious endurance

of suffering innocence; that, in New England, all organized opposition to our cause has vanished; that our efforts are unceasing to gain a complete mastery over the public sentiment of the Nation and that in Massachusetts, where, only two years since, Abolition was a mere foot-ball among all political parties to show their contempt and dexterity in kicking it, these same parties are now "bowing and scraping" to us, with cap-in-hand, at every new election, knowing as they do that we hold the balance of power in our hands, and can award victory or defeat according to their espousal of the cause of liberty.

Upon the slaveholding States we make no perceptible impression. No opponent of slavery can tread upon their soil as an abolitionist without the risk of martyrdom. I have relinquished the expectation that they

will ever, by more moral suasion, consent to emancipate their Victims. I believe that nothing but the exterminating judgments of heaven can shatter the chain of the slave and destroy the power of his oppressor. The wildest animals may be tamed in the course of time, but tyrants, as all history shows, must be destroyed. I am clear, moreover, in the conviction that, tho' astonishing changes have taken place in favor of emancipation among the people of the nominally free States within the last five years, the fate of this nation is nevertheless sealed.

Repentance, if it come at all, will come too late. Our sins have gone up over our heads, and our iniquities unto the clouds, and a just God means to dash us in pieces as a potter's vessel is broken. As a nation, our pride is intolerable, our infatuation amazing.

"All men", says the great moral poet,
"think all men mortal but themselves
- and we republicans, we Christians
we who have so bravely fought for
liberty find no difficulty in persuad-
ing ourselves that we are immortal.
All other people, of whatever language
tribe, country, or clime, may perish,
but we can never waste or decay.
Time shall not be able to erase a single
stripe, or obscure a single star, upon
our banner. We are a vain people, and
our love of adulation is excessive.
We imagine, and are constantly taught
to believe, that our flight like a strong
Angel's is onward and upward, with-
out pause, without weariness; that tho
an earthquake should shake all Eu-
-rope, and engulf empires, it could
not disturb a platter on our shelves;
and that the sun of our freedom shall
be co-eternal with the orb of day. Like

ancient Edom our habitation is high;
we have exalted ourselves as an eagle,
and set our nest among the stars; and
we are saying in the pride of our hearts
"Who shall bring us down to the ground"?

But it is in vain that we boast of
our Constitution, our glorious Union,
our republican institutions. It is worse
than idle for us to say that we are "in the
full tide of successful experiment".

The experiment has wholly failed. We
are madly attempting to perform impos-
sibilities. Talk of our national strength
and prowess? As if, were it a thousand
times more mighty than it is, God could
not sink this nation as a millstone in
the depths of the sea, and it shall never
be missed - and thus vindicate his
eternal justice, advance the cause
of human liberty, promote his
peace in the earth, and establish
a kingdom of righteousness that

shall never be destroyed! For
what are the United States in the
estimation of the Almighty? Do
their dimensions excite his wonder?
Is he impressed by their arts and
sciences, their enterprise & opulence,
their politics and religion, their
high pretensions and solemn pro-
testations? It is as true and as
certain now, as it ever was, that
"the nation and kingdom that will
not serve him shall perish; yea,
those nations shall be utterly wasted.
It has been confidently asserted, that
if our experiment fail, all hope will
will be taken from the earth. As if
down-trodden, benighted man, where
ever pining in chains, or grovelling
in degradation, - despite all the
mutations of earthly empires, - will
not ultimately rise up in majesty,

— emerge into light, and stand forth
— "redeemed, regenerated, and disenthral-
ed"! — As if, come what may of this
Republic, it were doubtful whether the
kingdoms of this world will ever be-
come the kingdoms of our Lord and
of his Christ!

While, therefore, my hope of the
peaceful and voluntary overthrow of
slavery in the Southern States of this
nation is very feeble, my faith in
the promises of God, that he will
maintain the cause of the afflicted
and the right of the poor, and that
he will deliver the oppressed out
of the hand of the spoiler, is un-
faltering, invincible. And while
it is my earnest prayer that the
judgments of Heaven may be a-
verted from us by timely repentance
— still, if our destruction is to come,
I am ready to say "O give thanks unto

the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts; for his mercy endureth for ever!"

As in England, so in this Country - the women have done and are doing more for the extirpation of slavery than the other sex. In their petitions to Congress, they outnumber us at least three, perhaps five to one. At the recent session of that body, a million of names were sent in, in the course of a month, remonstrating against the annexation of Texas to the United States. Of that immense number, a very large proportion were females. Our gifted friends the Grunkes, are exerting an almost angelic influence wherever they go. Their public lectures are thronged by both sexes, and their triumph over prejudice and error has been most signal.

It is now more than eight years since I entered upon this mighty work. The more I labor, the less weary I grow. Rely upon it, American Abolitionists will never give up the conflict through fatigue, pusillanimity or apathy. Come what may, they can no more be divorced from the Cause, than they can give up their allegiance to God. Some of them may - nay, some of them have in a trying hour, turned recreant; but the great body fear God and will keep his Commandments.

The many dear friends in England, with whom it was my privilege to become acquainted, are none of them forgotten by me. My heart swells and my eyes moisten as I think of their kindness. It is not probable that we shall ever meet again on earth - O may we all meet in Heaven to be parted no more! Your grateful & admiring friend
(Signed) Wm Lloyd Garrison.

It is a very common mistake to suppose that the
ancient Greeks and Romans were all philosophers.
The more we know of the life of the people, the
more we are struck by the fact that the great
majority of them were engaged in the pursuit of
wealth and power. The few who were devoted to
the study of philosophy were generally of the
aristocratic class, and their numbers were
very small. The great mass of the people
were engaged in the pursuit of wealth and
power, and their lives were spent in the
struggle for existence. The few who were
devoted to the study of philosophy were
generally of the aristocratic class, and
their numbers were very small. The great
mass of the people were engaged in the
pursuit of wealth and power, and their
lives were spent in the struggle for
existence.